



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II DURING THE VISIT TO THE CATHEDRAL OF PHILADELPHIA

Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul, Philadelphia

Wednesday, 3 October 1979

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I give thanks to the Lord for permitting me to come back to this city of Philadelphia, to this State of Pennsylvania. I have very happy memories of being here before as your guest, and I remember especially the Eucharistic Congress and Bicentennial celebration in 1976 that I attended as Archbishop of Cracow. Today, by the grace of God, I come here as Successor of Peter to bring you a message of love and to strengthen you in your faith. In your kind welcome I feel that you want to honor in me the Christ whom I represent and who lives in all of us—all of us who through the Holy Spirit form one community, one communion in faith and love. I feel moreover that I am truly among friends, and I feel very much at home in your midst.

In a very particular way I wish to thank you, Cardinal Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia, for the invitation you extended to me, to come here and celebrate the Eucharist together with you and your people. A heartfelt greeting also goes to the clergy, religious and laity of this local Church. I have come as your Brother in Christ, bringing with me the same message that the Lord Jesus himself brought to the villages and cities in the Holy Land: let us praise the Lord our God and Father, and let us love one another !

It gives me great pleasure to meet you here in the Cathedral of Philadelphia, for it has a deep meaning for me. Above all, it means you: the living Church of Christ, here and now, alive in faith, united in the love of Jesus Christ.

This Cathedral recalls the memory of Saint John Neumann, once Bishop of this See, and now and for ever a saint of the universal Church. In this edifice, his message and his example of holiness must continually be transmitted to every new generation of young people. And if we listen carefully today we can hear Saint John Neumann speaking to all of us in the words of the Letter to the Hebrews: "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you ; consider how their lives ended, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (*Heb 13 :8*).

Finally, this Cathedral links you to the great Apostles of Rome, Peter and Paul. They, in turn, continue to give you their testimony to Christ, to proclaim to you Christ's divinity, to acknowledge him before the world. Here today in Philadelphia, the confession of Peter becomes for all of us a personal act of faith, and this act of faith we make together, as we say to Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Mt 16 :16*). And with Saint Paul, each one of us is called say in the depths of our hearts and before the world: "I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (*Gal 2 :20*).

This Cathedral is also linked in religion to the heritage of this historic city. Every service to morality and spirituality is a service to the civilization of man ; it is a contribution to human happiness and to true well-being.

And so, from this Cathedral I offer my greetings to the whole City of Philadelphia, the civil authorities and all the people. As the City of brotherly love, as the first Capital of the United States of America, you are a symbol of freedom and fraternal relations. My greeting is also a prayer. May the common dedication and the united efforts of all your citizens—Catholics, Protestants and Jews alike—succeed in making your inner city and suburbs places where people are no strangers to each other, where every man, woman and child feels respected; where nobody feels abandoned, rejected or alone.

Asking for your prayerful support for my visit of friendship and pastoral concern, I extend my blessing to all of you, to those present here today, to your dear ones at home, to the aged and the sick, and in a very special way to all the young people and the children.

God bless Philadelphia !

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